November 23, 1890
Fairbury Blade newspaper

JOHN VIRGIN DEAD

Suddenly Called While Attending a Meeting of the National French Draft Horse Association

Funeral Services in the City Today

Word was received here Tuesday evening of the death of John Virgin. Although he had been in poor health for some time past, his death was not expected and caused a shock to the community.

Mr. Virgin was presiding over a meeting of the National French Draft Horse Association which was being held at the Sherman House, Chicago, he being vice-president of that organization. Heart failure, supposed to have been brought on by the excitement of the debate on one of the questions before the meeting, was the immediate cause of his death.

The debate had just closed when he was taken ill and ask to be excused, and was assisted to a room in the hotel and physicians summoned. Their efforts were unavailing, however, and he passed away a half-hour later.

During his absence, the association had elected him vice-president and the members were cheering his election when the word was brought that he was dead.

Mr. Virgin was born in the Carroll County, Indiana, August 10, 1838. In 1854, he came with his parents to Illinois settling in Eppards Point township, where he lived on the farm until 1870 when he moved to Fairbury.

January 26, 1865, he was united in marriage to Serepta J. McDowell. Four children were born to them, two of whom, Mrs. A. Cooley, and Miss Daisy, together with the bereaved wife survive him.

The family moved to Chicago in 1896, Mr. Virgin being appointed to purchasing agent for the Garfield Park stables by Governor Tanner, which position he was filling at the time of his death.

He was a veteran of the War of Rebellion, enlisting as a member of Company K. 3d Illinois Cavalry, which started from this city August 7, 1861, and served for three years, being promoted to Orderly Sergeant in which capacity he acted in nearly three years.

Few men have taken as active and prominent part in the political and business affairs of this state as Mr. Virgin. He was a prominent member of the State Board of Agriculture and Chairman of the Special Committee which drafted the plans for the Illinois State building at the World's Fair and a director of the agricultural display at the fair.

He was a pioneer breeder of French draft horses and the first one to introduce that breed in Livingston County, following the importing business many years. He served as general superintendent of the State Fair and the fat stock show. He always took an active part in the affairs of his home town and was one of the prime movers in organizing the Fairbury Fair, serving as President of the association several terms. A staunch Republican, taking an active interest in the affairs of his party until his death.

Mr. Virgin was a man whom even his enemies admired. Active and aggressive in pushing forward all things which he had to do, and even his declining years and his continued ill health failed to break his vigorous spirit. His influence was always for the good and he will be missed and mourned by all whom he came into contact.

He was a charter member of Post No. 75 and according to his request during life he was laid to rest under their auspices. The pall bearers were all the members of his old company and were: Thomas Day, George Lynn, A.F. Filley, John Zimmerman, J.W. Hoover, Pontiac: T.M Thornton, Saunemin: G.B. Brownson, T.F. Baker.

The honorary pall bearers were John Kring, Palsey Clary, Capt. Baker, R.C. Straight, Joel Strawn, Ed Hodgson, E.S. Fucsman, Horace Babcock.

The funeral services were held this afternoon from the M.E. Church of which he had been a member for over twenty years. Rev. M.A. Head preached the sermon. The church was crowded with his old friends and neighbors in this city and prominent people with whom he had been identified from various parts of the state. The remains were laid to rest in the Fairbury cemetery.

Geo. H. Madden of Mendota and D.W. Vittum of Canton, Illinois, attended Mr. Virgin's funeral. Mr. Madden represented the State Board of Agriculture and Mr. Vittum the French Draft Horse Association.

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Transcribed by Dale C. Maley – Fairbury, IL Historian